

THE FOREIGN-BORN POPULATION IN 2003

Having the facts on America's growing cultural diversity is essential for good government and good business. In some parts of the country, the characteristics of the foreign-born population are taken into account when developing educational programs, designing street signs, and providing social services. This population defies generalization because it is both diverse and rapidly changing.

The Foreign-Born Population

In 2003, 33.5 million people—or 12 percent of the civilian noninstitutionalized population—were foreign born, according to the Annual Social and Economic Supplement (ASEC) to the Current Population Survey (CPS).¹ Almost 14 percent entered the United States since 2000 and another 37 percent entered during the 1990s. Among those arriving since 1990, 15 percent were naturalized.² Citizenship rates increased with length of residence. Among the foreign born who entered the United States before 1970, 81 percent were naturalized by 2003.

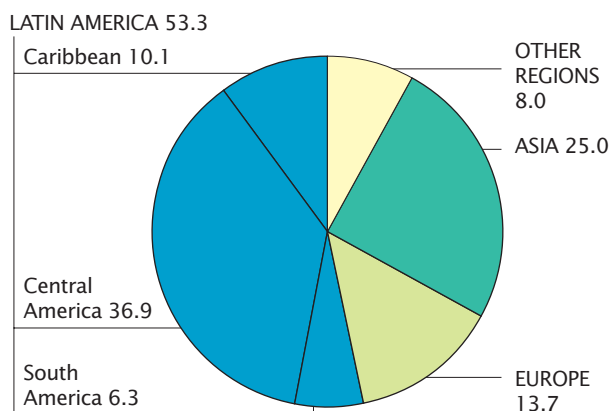
Countries of Birth

Among the foreign born in 2003, 53 percent were born in Latin America, 25 percent in Asia, 14 percent in Europe, and 8 percent in other regions of the world. More than two-thirds of those from Latin America were

born in Central America, including Mexico, as shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
Foreign Born by World Region of Birth: 2003

(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2003.

¹ The estimates in this report (which may be shown in text, figures, and tables) are based on responses from a sample of the population and may differ from actual values because of sampling variability or other factors. As a result, apparent differences between the estimates for two or more groups may not be statistically significant. All comparative statements have undergone statistical testing and are significant at the 90-percent confidence level unless otherwise noted. For more information on the accuracy of the data, see Appendix A.

² Generally, at least 5 years of residence is required for U.S. citizenship, so rates for the more recently arrived will always be lower than the rates for people who came to the United States earlier. Measures of citizenship status based on the ASEC data differ from naturalization rates. Naturalization rates represent the percentage of legal immigrants eligible for U.S. citizenship who have become U.S. citizens. Although most foreign-born people living in the United States are legal immigrants, and therefore are eligible for naturalization, at any given time several million foreign-born people with nonimmigrant status also live in the United States (such as students, diplomats, and unauthorized migrants) and many of them are included in the ASEC data. Because of this, ASEC citizenship proportions are lower than Office of Immigration Statistics' naturalization rates for all length-of-residence categories. For more information, see *Profile of the Foreign-Born Population in the United States: 2000* (P23-206), Section 7, "Citizenship Status."

Words That Count

The **foreign-born population** refers to people who were not U.S. citizens at birth.

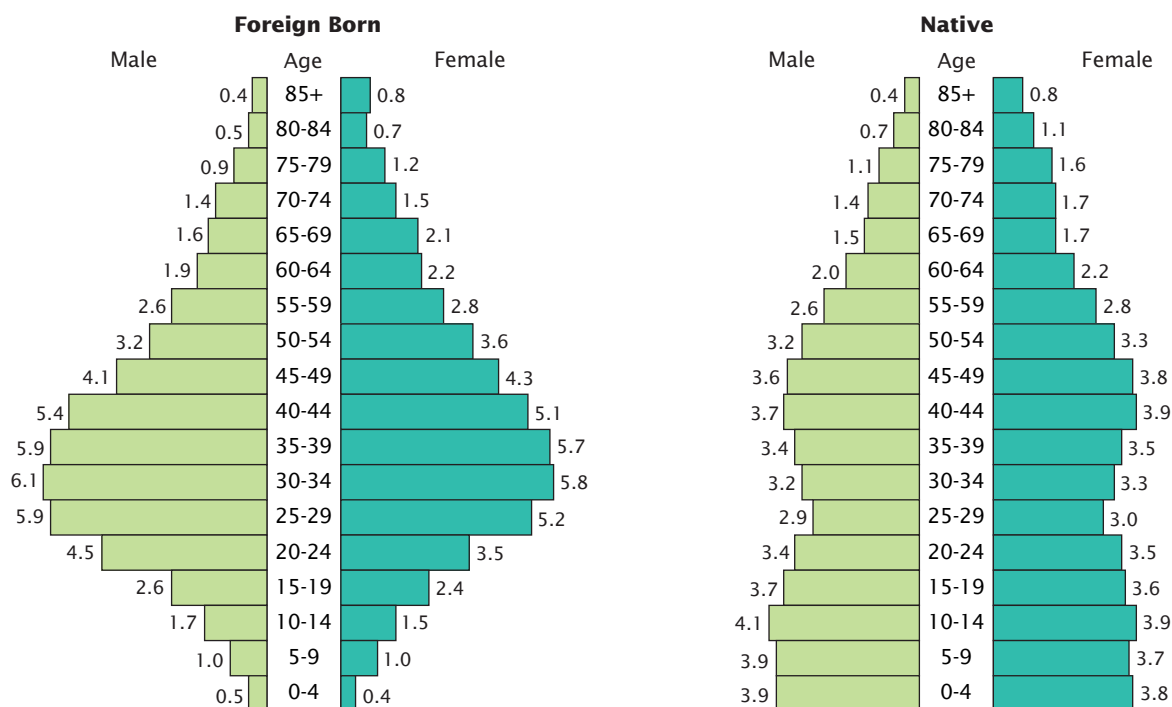
The **native population** refers to people who were born in the United States or a U.S. Island Area, such as Puerto Rico, or who were born abroad of at least one U.S.-citizen parent.

World regions used in this chapter—Europe, Asia, Latin America, and Other Regions—are based on United Nations definitions. Latin America can be subdivided into Central America (including Mexico), South America, and the Caribbean. The Other Regions category includes Northern America, Africa, and Oceania.

Figure 2.

Native and Foreign-Born Populations by Age and Sex: 2003

(In percent)¹



¹Each bar represents the percent of the foreign-born or native population who were within the specified age group and of the specified sex. Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Annual Social and Economic Supplement, 2003.

Regional Differences

The West was home to the largest share of the foreign-born population living in the United States (37 percent)—while 21 percent of the native population lived there. The South accounted for 29 percent of the foreign-born population and 37 percent of the native population. The Northeast was home to 22 percent of the foreign born and 19 percent of natives. Twenty-four percent of the native population and 11 percent of the foreign-born population lived in the Midwest. In 2003, 44 percent of the foreign born lived in the central cities of U.S. metropolitan areas, compared with 27 percent of natives.

Age Distribution

In 2003, 80 percent of the foreign born were aged 18 to 64, compared with 60 percent of natives. Among the group 25 to 44, 45 percent of the foreign born were this age, compared with 27 percent of natives (Figure 2).

The percentages of the foreign-born population and the native population 65 and older were very close (11 percent and 12 percent, respectively). Fewer foreign-born residents were under age 18: 9 percent, compared with 28 percent for natives. The small proportion of the foreign born in the youngest age group reflects the fact that most of the children of foreign-born parents were natives.

Foreign-born families were larger than families of natives.³ While 25 percent of families with a foreign-born householder had five or more members, 13 percent of families with a native householder were this large.

³ Families are households consisting of two or more individuals, at least one of whom is related to the householder. The Census Bureau defines the nativity of a household (native or foreign born) by the nativity of the householder, regardless of the nativity of the other household members.

Moving to America— Moving to Homeownership (1994 to 2002)

In 2002, homeownership rates for natives (70 percent), naturalized citizens (68 percent), and noncitizens (35 percent) were among the highest levels since data were first collected on homeownership and nativity in the 1994 CPS.⁴ For both naturalized citizens and noncitizens, homeownership rates were generally higher for householders who had lived in this country the longest. Among naturalized householders who entered the country before 1975, 77 percent owned their own home, compared with 60 percent of those who entered the country later. In a similar vein, 63 percent of noncitizen householders who lived in the country prior to 1975 were homeowners, compared with 32 percent of householders who entered the country more recently.

Homeownership rates varied by place of birth. The rate of homeownership was 75 percent for naturalized European householders, 70 percent for naturalized Asian householders, and 62 percent for naturalized Latin American householders, as shown in Figure 3. These rates may be related to the length of time these

householders lived in the United States. For instance, 32 percent of European-born householders entered the United States in 1975 or later, compared with 74 percent of Asian-born householders.

For natives, naturalized citizens, and noncitizens, marital status was related to homeownership rates. Married-couple households, for example, had higher

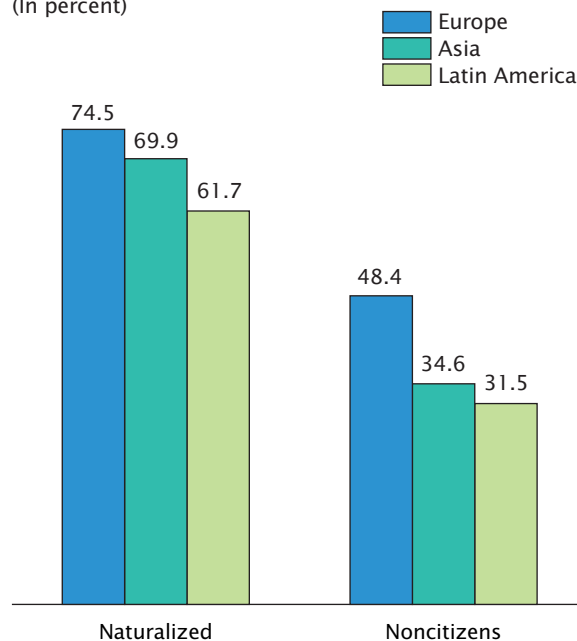
homeownership rates than nonfamily households with two or more members. For natives, 86 percent of married-couple households and 42 percent of nonfamily households with two or more members owned their own homes. For naturalized householders, the homeownership rates were 79 percent and 44 percent, respectively. Among noncitizens, the rates were 45 percent and 14 percent, respectively.

The likelihood of homeownership increased with age. For native householders, homeownership was highest among those aged 55 to 64 (83 percent) and lowest for those under 35 (44 percent). The same pattern held true for naturalized citizens, with 76 percent of householders 55 to 64 owning their homes, compared with 48 percent of those under 35. While homeownership rates were lower for noncitizens of all ages, they reflected the same pattern. For example, among those 55 and older, the homeownership rate was 52 percent, compared with 22 percent for those under 35.

Homeownership rates were higher for naturalized citizens than for natives in the Midwest, the South, and the West. The rates were 78 percent for naturalized householders and 74 percent for native householders in the Midwest; 73 percent and 71 percent, respectively, in the South; and 67 percent and 66 percent, respectively, in the West. In the Northeast, naturalized householders (59 percent) were less likely than native householders (68 percent) to be homeowners.

Figure 3.
Homeownership Rates of the Foreign Born by Citizenship Status and World Region of Birth of Householder: 2002

(In percent)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey, Housing Vacancy Survey, 2002.

⁴ Information on homeownership and nativity comes from the Current Population Survey's Housing Vacancy Survey.

Educational and Economic Characteristics

Among the population 25 and older in 2003, 67 percent of the foreign born were high school graduates or had more education, compared with 88 percent of natives. The percentage with this much education was above 80 percent for people born in Asia, Europe, and Other Regions and 49 percent for those from Latin America. About 27 percent of both the foreign born and natives had a bachelor's degree or more education.

The 2002 median household income for foreign-born households was \$37,500, compared with \$44,300 for natives.⁵ Households maintained by a foreign-born householder who was not a citizen had a median of \$32,800, compared with \$46,000 for those maintained by a naturalized citizen.

Overall, 17 percent of foreign-born residents lived in poverty in 2002, compared with 12 percent of natives. Foreign-born noncitizens were twice as likely as those who were naturalized to be poor—22 percent and 10 percent, respectively.

⁵ Data on income and poverty for 2002 are from the 2003 ASEC. See the chapters on money income and poverty for more information.

The Census Bureau Can Tell You More

For more detailed information, consult the following U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Reports: *The Foreign-Born Population in the United States: March 2003* (P20-551) by Luke Larsen and *Moving to America—Moving to Homeownership: 1994 to 2002* (H121/03-1) by Robert R. Callis.

Look for complete reports and detailed tables on the Census Bureau's World Wide Web site <www.census.gov>. Click on "F" and select "Foreign-Born Population Data" or "H" for "Homeownership/Housing Vacancies and Homeownership Data."

Contact the Census Bureau's Customer Service Center at 301-763-INFO (4636)

For information on the foreign born, e-mail <pop@census.gov>.

See the chapter on housing for more information on housing or e-mail <hhes-info@census.gov>.

For information on the source and accuracy of the estimates, see Appendix A.